

## RESEARCH ON SCHOOL COUNSELING EFFECTIVENESS

California has made important strides in class size reduction, higher academic standards, greater accountability, and improved teacher preparation. The important missing link in these initiatives to improve student learning is the need for more school counselors and other student support services, such as school psychologists, school social workers, and school nurses. Traditionally, California students' access to counselors varies by grade level, and 21 percent of California school districts have no counseling programs at all. When counseling programs exist, counselors are often asked to add administrative duties such as testing, supervising, and class scheduling. The ratio of students per counselor in this state averages 945 to 1, compared to the national average of 490 to 1, ranking California last in the nation.

School counselors provide counseling programs in three domains: academic, career, and personal/social. Their services and programs help students resolve emotional, social, or behavioral problems and help them develop a clearer focus or sense of direction. Effective counseling programs are important to the school climate and a crucial element in improving student achievement.

Following is a collection of sources that address the effectiveness of school counseling and other student support services, including their contribution to the personal and academic success of students.

### **1. Reviews of the research on school counseling show that the services of school counselors have a positive effect on children.**

Borders, L.D., & Drury, S.M. (1992). Comprehensive school counseling programs: A review for policymakers and practitioners. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 70, 487-498.

Gerler, E.R. (1985). Elementary school counseling research and the classroom learning environment. *Elementary School Guidance & Counseling*, 20, 39-48.

St. Clair, K.L. (1989). Middle school counseling research: A resource for school counselors. *Elementary School Guidance & Counseling*, 23, 219-226.

Whitson, S.C., & Sexton, T.L. (1998). A review of school counseling outcome research: implications for practice. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 76, 412-426.

### **2. Quantitative analyses of research (meta-analyses) also substantiate the beneficial effects of school counseling programs.**

Baker, S.B., Swisher, J.D., Nadenichek, P.E. & Popowicz, C.L. (1984). Measured effects of primary prevention strategies. *The Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 62, 459-464.

Prout, H.T. & Demartino, R.A. (1986). A meta-analysis of school-based studies of psychotherapy. *Journal of School Psychology, 24*, 285-292.

Sprinthal, N.A. (1981). A new model for research in the science of guidance and counseling. *The Personnel and Guidance Journal, 59*, 487-493.

**3. Two studies find that elementary guidance activities have a positive influence on elementary students' academic achievement.**

Hadley, H.R. (1988). Improving reading scores through a self-esteem prevention program. *Elementary School Guidance & Counseling, 22*, 248-252.

Lee, R.S. (1993). Effects of classroom guidance on student achievement. *Elementary School Guidance & Counseling, 27*, 163-171.

**4. School counseling programs have significant influence on discipline problems. Baker and Gerler reported that students who participated in a school-counseling program had significantly less inappropriate behaviors and more positive attitudes toward school than those students who did not participate in the program. Another study reported that group counseling provided by school counselors significantly decreased participants' aggressive and hostile behaviors.**

Baker, S. B., & Gerler, E. R. (2001). Counseling in schools. In D. C. Locke, J. E. Myers, and E. L. Herr (Eds.), *The Handbook of Counseling*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Omizo, M.M., Hershberger, J.M., & Omizo, S.A. (1988). Teaching children to cope with anger. *Elementary School Guidance & Counseling, 22*, 241-245.

**5. Research indicates that school counselors are effective in teaching social skills.**

Verduyn, C.M., Lord, W., & Forrest, G.C. (1990). Social skills training in schools: An evaluation study. *Journal of Adolescence, 13*, 3-16.

**6. School counselors are very effective in assisting middle school children in the area of career development.**

Whiston, S. C., Sexton, T. L., & Lasoff, D. L. (1998). Career-intervention outcome: A replication and extension of Oliver and Spokane (1988). *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 45*, 150-165.

**7. Children who are experiencing family problems report being helped by school counselors.**

Omizo, M.M. & Omizo, S.A. (1988). The effects of participation in group counseling sessions on self-esteem and locus of control among adolescents from divorced families. *The School Counselor, 36*, 54-60.

Rose, C.C. & Rose, S.D. (1992). Family change groups for the early age child. *Special Services in the Schools, 6*, 113-127.

- 8. School counseling programs designed to teach students peer mediation skills are highly effective. In fact, studies show that students trained in peer mediation use these skills in other settings (e.g., at home).**

Diver-Stammes, A.C. (1991). Assessing the effectiveness of an inner-city high school peer counseling program. *Urban Education*, 26, 269-284.

Robinson, S.E., Morrow, S., Kigin, T. & Lindeman, M. (1991). Peer counselors in a high school setting: Evaluation of training and impact on students. *The School Counselor*, 39, 35-40.

- 9. Health and mental health care services can play an important role in violence prevention at all levels (primary, secondary and tertiary), including preventing problem behaviors from developing; identifying and serving specific, at-risk populations; and reducing the deleterious effects of violence on victims and witnesses.**

*Youth and Violence*. Commission for the Prevention of Youth Violence, December 2000. Available on the Internet at <http://www.ama-assn.org/violence>

- 10. School counselors were effective in reducing victimization by assisting victimized children, reducing bullying behaviors and modifying the school climate and structure.**

Hanish, L.D. & Guerra, N.G. (2000). Children who get victimized at school: What is known? What can be done? *Professional School Counseling*, 4, 113-119.

- 11. Both the state and federal governments have recognized the importance of school counselors. California's 1999-2000 Legislature passed a law (Assembly Bill 1113) providing new funding for school safety. This funding can be used to add student support services, including school counseling. In addition, the federal government's involvement includes a funding opportunity specifically directed at increasing the number of elementary school counselors given that such counselors "can contribute to the personal growth, educational development, and emotional well-being of elementary and secondary school children by providing professional counseling, intervention, and referral services" (U.S. Senate, 1999, p. 2).**

Riley, P.L. & McDaniel, J. (2000). School violence, prevention, intervention, and crisis response. *Professional School Counseling*, 4:2, 120-125.

- 12. Counselors are effective in assisting high school students with college choices.**

*Student Poll*. (2000). Art & Science Group, Inc. 4:2, 1-10. Available on the Internet at [www.artsci.com](http://www.artsci.com)

- 13. A study shows that school counselor effectiveness was influenced by school climate. In schools with effective counseling programs, principals generally provided enthusiastic support for the programs and encouragement to the**

**counselors. Another common element was a clear understanding between counselors and administrators as to the goals of the school counseling programs. These conditions were generally not present in ineffective programs.**

Sutton, J.M. & Fall, M. (1995). The relationship of school climate factors to counselor self-efficacy. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 73, 331-336.

- 14. Research shows that school counseling interventions have a substantial impact on students' educational and personal development. Individual and small-group counseling, classroom guidance and consultation activities seem to contribute directly to students' success in the classroom and beyond. School counselors should spend the majority of their time performing these interventions. Coordination activities should be confined to those that improve the program's efficiency and accountability.**

Borders, L.D. & Drury, S.M. (1992). Comprehensive school counseling programs: A review for policymakers and practitioners. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 70, 487-498.

- 15. Studies show effective counseling programs are based on human development theories. Program content, goals, and interventions should reflect this theoretical foundation. A developmental program is proactive and preventive, helping students acquire the knowledge, skills, self-awareness and attitudes necessary for successful mastery of normal developmental tasks. Developmentally-based programs increase the visibility of the counseling program and ensure that more students are served (Myrick; Shaw & Goodyear). There is also substantial empirical evidence that these programs promote student development and academic success.**

Myrick, R.D. (1987). *Developmental guidance and counseling: A practical approach*. Minneapolis, MN: Educational Media Corporation.

Shaw, M.C. & Goodyear, R.K. (1984). Prologue to primary prevention in schools. *The Personnel and Guidance Journal*, 62, 446-447.

Borders, L.D. & Drury, S.M. (1992). Comprehensive school counseling programs: A review for policymakers and practitioners. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 70, 487-498.

- 16. A study of Missouri high schools shows that schools with more fully implemented model guidance programs had students who were more likely to report that (a) they had earned higher grades, (b) their education was better preparing them for the future, (c) their school made more career and college information available to them, and (d) their school had a more positive climate (greater feelings of belonging and safety at school, classes less likely to be interrupted, peers behaving better). After removing the variables of school enrollment size, socioeconomic status, and percentage of minority students in attendance, positive program effects were identifiable. Results highlight the important roles school counselors play in promoting the central**

**educational goals of their schools and support a comprehensive guidance program focus for university counseling faculty who train school counselors.**

Lapan, R.T., Gysbers, N.C., & Sun, Y. (1997). The impact of more fully implemented guidance programs on the school experiences of high school students: A statewide evaluation study. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 75, 292-302.

- 17. School counselors have proven effective in preventing students from committing suicide. The most effective prevention programs start with younger students and portray suicide as a mental health problem, not a dramatic way of ending a life. It is essential that counselors involve the parents of troubled students in the counseling process.**

Jones, R. (2001). Suicide Watch: What can you do to stop children from killing themselves? *American School Board Journal*, May, 16-21.

- 18. In studies on the effects of a small group counseling approach for failing elementary school students, 83 percent of participating students showed improvement in grades.**

Boutwell, D.A., & Myrick, R.D. (1992). The go for it club. *Elementary School Guidance & Counseling*, 27, 65-72.

- 19. A study on the effects of counseling on classroom performance found that the underachieving students who received counseling improved significantly on the Self-Rating Scale of Classroom Behavior and in mathematics and language arts grades.**

Gerler, E. R., Kinney, J., & Anderson, R. F. (1985). The effects of counseling on classroom performance. *Journal of Humanistic Education and Development*, 23, 155-165.

- 20. The School Dropout Assistance Program (1991-1996) funded a number of projects to test and evaluate the effect of promising strategies for dropout prevention and re-entry. The results found that counseling services were one of the key elements of promising dropout prevention initiatives.**

Kaufman, P., Klein, S., & Frase, M. (1999). Dropout Rates in the United States, 1997. Statistical Analysis Report. U.S. Department of Education.

- 21. Studies on high school attrition indicate that preventive counseling, occurring before students are in crisis, reduces the risk of these students dropping out later.**

Bearden, L.J., Spencer, W.A., & Moracco, J.C. (1989). A study of high school dropouts. *The School Counselor*, 27, 113-120.

Morey, R.E., Miller, C.D., Fulton, R., & Rosen, L.A. (1993). High school peer counseling: The relationship between student satisfaction and peer counselors' style of helping. *The School Counselor*, 40, 293-300.

Praport, H. (1993). Reducing high school attrition: Group counseling can help. *School Counselor*, 40(4), 309-311.

Wirth-Bond, S., Coyne, A., & Adams, M. (1991). A school counseling program that reduces dropout rates. *The School Counselor*, 39, 131-137.

**22. Counseling decreases classroom disturbances. Counseling services support teachers in the classroom and enable teachers to provide quality instruction designed to assist students in achieving high standards. Students in schools that provide counseling services indicated that their classes were less likely to be interrupted by other students, and that their peers behaved better in school.**

Lapan, R.T., Gysbers, N.C., & Sun, Y. (1997). The impact of more fully implemented guidance programs on the school experiences of high school students: A statewide evaluation study. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 75, 292-302.

**23. Students who have access to counseling programs reported being more positive, and having greater feelings of belonging and safety in their schools.**

Lapan, R.T., Gysbers, N.C., & Sun, Y. (1997). The impact of more fully implemented guidance programs on the school experiences of high school students: A statewide evaluation study. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 75, 292-302.

**24. One study found that high school counselors influenced their students' future plans by encouraging them to have high expectations. A high proportion of 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students who were surveyed perceived that their counselor expected them to attend college, regardless of their racial background. High school students' own educational expectations for themselves increased over time.**

Mau, W.C., Hitchcock, R., & Calvert, C. (1998). High school students' career plans: The influence of others' expectations. *Professional School Counseling*, 2:2, 161-166.

**25. Students trained by counselors to be peer facilitators are effective in helping sixth grade problem-behavior students adjust to middle school. In one study, counselors worked with eighth grade peer facilitators once a week for six weeks, focusing on how to (a) establish a helping relationship, (b) use high facilitative responses, (c) lead a small group discussion, and (d) use a four-step problem-solving model. The facilitators demonstrated that they could help students who are having problems adjusting to school, especially in terms of their school attendance, school grades, and attitude towards school. Discipline referrals were also reduced.**

Tobias, A.K. & Myrick, R.D. (1999). A peer facilitator-led intervention with middle school problem-behavior students. *Professional School Counseling*, 3:1, 27-33.

Myrick, R.D. & Sorensen, D.L. (1992). *Helping skills for middle school students*. Minneapolis, MN: Educational Media Corporation.

**26. Counselor-led career interventions influenced the educational choices of eighth grade students as they prepared for high school.**

Peterson, G.W., Long, K.L., & Billups, A. (1999). The effect of three career interventions on educational choices of eighth grade students. *Professional School Counseling*, 3:1, 34-42.

**27. Counselor-led, developmental guidance units presented in ninth grade classrooms have the potential to improve students' expressed behavior and general school attitudes, while addressing their developmental needs. The effectiveness of this intervention was consistent across the different levels of student achievement and attitudes about school. A proactive approach to program development, such as inviting input from teachers, students, counselors, and administrators through periodic needs assessments, may maximize existing resources and services offered to non-college and college-bound students. The literature suggests that such guidance programming, based on the developmental, preventive guidance model, may help to overcome the fragmented, impersonal, and confusing manner in which services are often delivered to high school students and teachers.**

Schlossberg, S.M., Morris, J.D., & Lieberman, M.G. (2001). The effects of a counselor-led guidance intervention on students' behaviors and attitudes. *Professional School Counseling*, 4:3, 156-164.

Bearden, L.J., Spencer, W.A., & Moracco, L.C. (1989). A study of high school dropouts. *The School Counselor*, 37, 113-120.

Morey, R.E., Miller, C.D., Rosen, L.A., & Fulton, R. (1993). High school peer counseling: The relationship between student satisfaction and peer counselors' style of helping. *The School Counselor*, 40, 293-300.

Praport, H. (1993). Reducing high school attrition: Group counseling can help. *The School Counselor*, 40, 309-311.

Wirth-Bond, S., Coyne, A., & Adams, M. (1991). A school counseling program that reduces dropout rate. *The School Counselor*, 39, 131-137.

**28. Implementing comprehensive school counseling programs is consistently associated with important indicators of student safety and success. A study found that school counselors who were more fully engaged in providing students with a unique network of emotional and instructional support services were more likely to exert a positive impact than counselors who did not implement such activities. After researchers controlled for differences between schools due to socioeconomic status and enrollment size, students attending middle schools with more fully implemented comprehensive programs reported (a) feeling safer attending their schools, (b) having better relationships with their teachers, (c) believing that their education was more relevant and important to their futures, (d) being more satisfied with the quality of education available to them in their schools, (e) having fewer problems related to the physical and interpersonal milieu in their schools, and (f) earning higher grades.**

Lapan, R.T., Gysbers, N.C., & Petroski, G.F. (2001). Helping seventh graders be safe and successful: A statewide study of the impact of comprehensive guidance and counseling programs. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 79, 320-330.

29. **A study done in Gwinnett County, Georgia shows that school counselors impact students' academic performance and can increase the on-task, productive behavior of students and reduce disruptive behaviors. The Behavior Rating Checklist (BRC) indicated statistically significant decreases in disruptive behaviors and significant increases in productive, on-task behaviors for both the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and the 5<sup>th</sup> grade students tested. Language arts progress was statistically significant for both grade levels as well.**

Mullis, F. & Otwell, P. (1997). Counselor accountability: A study of counselor effects on academic achievement and student behaviors. *Georgia School Counselors Association Journal*, 1:4, 4-12.

Watts, V. & Thomas, B. (1997). Proving that counseling programs do count: The counseling accountability. *Georgia School Counselors Association Journal*, 1:4, 1-3.

This list represents a summary of research on school counseling effectiveness. For more in depth information and further use, consult the original documents.